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✓ October 29, 1962

McGB:

Attached by Ray Garthoff is the best quick assessment of Soviet backdown of those I've seen.

I'd underline his conclusion that we should take the initiative now to offer negotiations on other main East-West issues. Above all, we may have a first class chance of getting some kind of a viable standstill arrangement on Berlin.

Now would be the time to beat up Adenauer (here Monday) and offer the Soviets a deal. If they don't take it, we're no worse off (and look good for having made the effort). If they do take it, so much the better.

  
RWK

Attach. Garthoff paper  
dd 10/29/62, subj. Sig of  
Soviet Backdown for Future  
US Policy

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12358, Sec. 3.3

US ARCHAEOLOGIST (DUK-523-32)  
FMX/RM MARS Date 5/16/63

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Deputy Undersecretary

## EXCISE

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October 29, 1962

EDENDUM

SUBJECT: Significance of the Soviet Backdown  
for Future US Policy

## 1. Short-Run Effects

Political - The short-run effects should be very favorable to the US. Unquestionably the US will emerge from this confrontation with increased prestige world-wide. The Soviet action should demonstrate once again the offensive nature of Soviet motivations more clearly than anything we could say. It should also demonstrate that the Soviets are not prepared to risk a decisive military showdown with the US over issues involving the extension of Soviet power. (We should be clear however that this is not to be confused with Soviet lack of willingness to "go to the mat" over an interest vital to Soviet security.) More specifically, short-run political effects should include the following:

a. Soviet ability to penetrate Latin America should suffer a reversal, though a base for future penetration may remain in Cuba for some time. Soviet intentions have been unmasked, and Soviet inability to force its will clearly demonstrated. Our problems in assisting Latin America to achieve a higher state of political and economic development will still require all of our best efforts. However, our efforts should be focused on the fundamental nature of the problem, and it is important that we continue to pursue our Latin American country internal programs, along with our broader development programs.

b. NATO should be strengthened. The firmness of the US stand, and perhaps even more importantly the categorical refusal to barter NATO assets for immediate US security interests, should provide assurance of US commitment to the Alliance.

c. Our position on Berlin should be greatly strengthened. Our resolute willingness to act in Cuba should result in a complete reassessment by the Soviets as to how far they can safely push US will in general, including Berlin. Similarly it should provide our Allies with fortitude for meeting Soviet threats.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE: A/CDC/MB

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DATE 10/8/04

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d. The effect upon the neutrals is more difficult to estimate, but in general is favorable.

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Military - The military benefits secured as a result of the Soviet backdown are similarly immense. Agreement not to proceed with additional missiles, and to dismantle existing missiles and launch facilities, cancels out the temporary increase in capability vis-a-vis the continued United States, which the Soviets achieved in their short-lived attempt to offset the current US nuclear strategic advantage.

## 2. Long-Run Effects

Political - An analysis of long-run effects is of course more uncertain. Unquestionably the Soviet defeat will have its impact on Soviet thinking and policymaking.

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We should not delude ourselves into believing that great and rapid changes will result in Soviet policy. People and governments simply do not and cannot change that quickly, even assuming the stimulus for doing so. This while it is useful to explore all avenues of solutions to world problems, such as disarmament, we must not expect quick or easy solutions. We would expect that the US will meet with the usual Soviet criticism, resistance, and negotiatory pressure. In short, we must not slip into euphoria over the successful course of events, assuming it continues to develop favorably.

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-3-

Military - Viewed in its long-run perspective, the Soviet backdown does not affect the Soviet military position in any important essential other than, of course, the important removal of the missiles from Cuba and awareness in Moscow of US refusal to permit any such venture. It is possible that the effect of these events might be to set in motion a redoubled Soviet effort to close the gap to development by the Soviets of a secure second strike capability.

3. General Conclusion

Our over-all preliminary conclusion may be summarized as follows:

a. We have in the recent situation gained broad political and military assets, on which we should attempt to capitalize. We have probably gained important, but less definitive, long-range benefits.

b. In these circumstances, it is vitally important that the US take the initiative in offering to negotiate on major issues between East and West. Without being bellicose on the basis of our new-found strength, nor on the other hand making concessions which would adversely affect our position of strength, we should press for fair but safeguarded solutions to outstanding problems.

If we have learned anything from this experience, it is that weakness, even only apparent weakness, invites Soviet transgression. At the same time, firmness in the last analysis will force the Soviets to back away from rash initiatives. We cannot now, nor can we in the future, accept Soviet protestations of "peaceful" coexistence at face value. The words may sound the same, but the meaning is different. Their willingness to cooperate in common endeavors can only be judged by performance. The difficult task for US policy in the future is to strike the correct fine balance between seeking cooperation from a forthcoming posture, while retaining the necessary strength and skepticism to insure ourselves and our friends against future duplicity.

- R. G. Smith

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